

Larry Blum

W-5-012

Office Hours:

Tues 11:00-11:50

Thurs 11:00-12:00

or by appointment (other times available)

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[feel free to e-mail me!]

Required books:

1. Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals (1785), edited by Lara Denis, Broadview editions (2005). [You *must* buy this edition of Kant's work, which is in the UMass Bookstore. No other edition has the same translation and the same selection of Kant's work.]
2. Arthur Schopenhauer, On the Basis of Morality (1841) (translated by E.F.J. Payne). Berghahn Books (1995 edition). This translation is required, and this is the best edition with that translation.

Website: I have a personal website on which I keep my teaching materials (as well as other things): BlumPhilosophy.com. Almost all the material for the course is in the 2 books above, so you will hardly ever need this website for course material. But the material on Kant on race is only on the website. Go to "Teaching". On left column of teaching home page is list of my courses. Click on this one to bring up the material. The website will be used to post both handouts and assignments, so you can check it when you miss a class.

Books on Reserve at Healey Library:

**the 2 books above

**Paul Guyer, Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007). A detailed commentary on the main work we read for the course. Very helpful. Sometimes Guyer does something more like restating what Kant says in somewhat clearer language than Kant's. Other times he gives helpful explanations of complicated concepts. Other times he explains interpretive controversies.

About the course:

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is the most influential moral philosopher in the Western tradition, and possibly the greatest overall philosopher in that tradition. He deeply influenced all philosophical thinking since his time, and through his works has influenced ordinary moral thought as well. We will be reading the whole of his introductory text to his moral thought, which he presents as working out the "supreme principle of morality" that is based on reason alone. Although much more accessible than some of his other works, the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals is quite challenging and difficult. You will have to read our selections from it

several times over to understand it, and we will work our way through it in its entirety in class. Don't be lulled into complacency by the small number of pages you have each week!!

The edition of the Groundwork which I have assigned to you has some short selections from some of his other, later ethical writings, and we will read some of them also. We will also read some of Kant's work on the idea of race, which has drawn a good bit of attention in philosophy in the past two decades as philosophers have looked at the previously-ignored racial writings of great historical figures in philosophy. The work on race has very important and interesting relations to Kant's moral philosophy, and we will be examining those relations also.

Finally, we will look at the moral philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), an important 19th century German philosopher. His moral philosophy is built on both a scathing critique, yet also a partial appropriation, of Kant. Schopenhauer is unusual among Western philosophers in being influenced by Buddhism, and his combination of Buddhism, Kantianism, and anti-Kantianism is quite fascinating.

The goals of the course will be:

1. To gain an understanding of one of the most important moral philosophers of all time, specifically in two respects: (a) to see how Kant understood the different parts of his moral philosophy as fitting together, and, in part, seeing how the moral writings connect with the larger project of what Kant called the "critical philosophy"—his epistemology and metaphysics—as he tries to demonstrate those connections in the *Groundwork*; (b) to gain a sympathetic understanding of Kant's way of thinking about human morality and the moral life for human beings.
2. To see something of the historical movement of ideas by scrutinizing the way Schopenhauer criticizes Kant and builds an alternative system of ethics in its place, yet one that can only be understood against its Kantian background.

Requirements and grades [these are somewhat provisional—that is, I might change them—depending on how things go in class]:

1. Two **5-page papers** on topics to be assigned: 20% each
2. **seven 1-page** (no more than 350 words) required but minimally graded assignments. The assignment is to briefly explain 3 main points in the reading for the day the assignment is due, and to pose one question in relation to that reading—something that is either not clear to you, or that you think might be a problem for Kant's view. These are to be turned in on Tuesday or Thursday at the beginning of class; you cannot turn in more than one per week. You have some leeway as to which week to turn them in; but you cannot go more than 2 weeks without turning one of these assignments in. The assignments will be graded as "no credit," "satisfactory," or "extraordinary": 15% altogether [about 2% for each one]. If you turn in fewer than 5 of these, you will lose .2 points (out of 4.0) on your *final* grade for each missed one (which includes ones on which you receive "no credit;" a "no credit" can be rewritten for credit).
3. A **final paper** (12-15 double-spaced pages [about 3000-4500 words]) on some important scholarly controversy in Kant's moral philosophy making use of secondary scholarly resources; or on some important aspect of Schopenhauer's criticisms of Kant and an examination of the soundness of those criticisms: 45%

4. Attendance and class participation: 10% [On-time attendance and in-class participation are required for this class. I expect all students to come to class having already carefully read the day's reading assignment and fully prepared to discuss, question, probe, and clarify the reading assigned.]

[You may note that the %s add up to more than 100%; but my formula will correct for this. Grades on your written work, except the one-pagers, will be on a 4.0 scale, as used in the official grading in computing your GPA.]

Electronic devices, such as computers, cell phones, and the like may *not* be used in this class. They divert your attention from what is going on in the class, and detract from the seriousness and sense of courteousness to your fellow students and to me. (If this presents a difficulty for you, please see me and we can work something out.)

Academic honesty:

The University's Code of Student Conduct, which defines academic honesty violations and procedures, can be found (as part of the Code of Student Conduct) at http://www.umb.edu/pages/standard_page/19536, with penalties spelled out at http://www.umb.edu/pages/standard_page/19538. Healey Library has a helpful tutorial on plagiarism at: <http://umb.libguides.com/plagiarism>. I *strongly* encourage you to consult with me, before handing in assignments, with questions or concerns about what constitutes a violation of the requirements of academic integrity. Penalties for cheating normally range from failing the assignment through failing the course but can also include suspension or expulsion from the university.

Disability Accommodations: Any student with a disability who is taking this course and needs classroom or exam accommodations should contact the Ross Center for Disability Services. The Ross Center for Disability Services is located in the Campus Center, UL 211. You can contact them by calling: 617- 287-7430 or sending an email to: ross.center@umb.edu. After you have an accommodation letter, meet with me as soon as possible in order to discuss accommodation provisions.

Syllabus [subject to slight change]:

January 29: Introduction

Feb 3 to March 5: (a) Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 47-118 in Denis [about 14 pages/week].

(b) the Groundwork is divided into "sections" and for each of the 3 sections, plus the Preface, Denis provides helpful commentary in her "Introduction." So, along with the Kant, you should read the portions of Denis's commentary that discuss that portion.

March 10: (a) Appendix B from Denis, selection from Kant's Critique of Practical Reason (1788), 127-139 (especially 134-139)

(b) Appendix A from Denis: Kant's "What is Enlightenment?", 119-125, and

(c) Appendix D: selection from Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (1797), 149-151 (1793)

March 12: TBA

March 17, 19: SPRING VACATION

March 24: TBA or (continued from March 10)

Kant on race

March 26:

(a) Kant, from Eze, Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader: “This fellow was quite black...a clear proof that when he said was stupid.” 38-64. This reading does not need to be read closely. Skim it to get the general idea. Some particularly significant passages are the following: 39-40 [beginning of 2nd paragraph]; 55[paragraph at bottom]-56; 58-59; 61[“Opinions on the Origin of Blackness”]; 63 [3rd full paragraph] [WEBSITE]

(b) Thomas Hill, Jr., and Bernard Boxill, “Kant and Race,” from Boxill (ed.), Race and Racism, 445-471 [WEBSITE]

March 31: (continued)

April 2: Thomas McCarthy, “Kant on Race and Development,” from Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development, 42-68 [WEBSITE]

April 7: (continued)

April 9 to May 12: Schopenhauer, On the Basis of Morality, 37-216 [I may fine-tune what you have to read of this book, although it is a good bit easier going than Kant so reading the whole thing in 3 weeks is not outside the realm of possibility]